

## Dancing In Crowded Conditions

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I picked up a new client recently. They own a beautiful place in the country and they collect antique cars. They display the cars in a 50 X 80 foot barn than has been tastefully finished on the inside with carpet, full acoustic insulation, a kitchen, bathrooms, and all kinds automobile bric-a-brac. In short, a beautiful place to dance except for the carpet.

They donate the space, without the antique cars, for groups to use to raise funds for charity. Their theme is Cars and Cowboys, so they wanted to incorporate square dancing and the associated dance forms. So, I was contacted to do the first party. I went out to see the venue and make plans.

The plan, we settled on, was to dance on the carpet. No booze was expected to be there because this was a mission effort of a very strict church sect. I was supposed to have a minimum 24 x 24 foot space for people to dance.

I like to arrive at these events at least an hour ahead of the event the first time. When I drove in, the parking area was already packed. The building was filled with people and tables and all kinds of other stuff to take up space. The mission group had rented a 16 by 20 foot portable dance floor and the tables had been set so close to the floor that the back legs of the chairs for the table were setting on the portable floor. I estimated there were about 300 people present. Booze was flowing freely and the actions of the people pretty much indicated that many were already getting pretty well oiled.

The owners of the facility quickly spotted me walking in the door and rushed over. The plans had been completely changed by the guests at the last minute. The crowd was much larger that they had planned on. Things, like a silent auction, had been added. The food catering firm had set up their serving table partly on the dance floor. There was to be a short presentation by the mission group before the dancing, complete with slides and multiple speakers. And so on.

Fortunately, I have been in this kind of a situation before. So, Judy and I enjoyed a very good steak dinner and listened to a "short" presentation of one hour in length. At the end of the "short" presentation, the people were squirming in their seats, because the chairs were hard and their hind ends hurt. Then it was my turn.

After the catering people had cleared enough space, I had the people join hands in a circle large enough to fill the portable dance floor (about 20) and we did Cat's Meow ([Click here](#)) and Frayley's Frolic ([Click here](#)). These are both big circle dances that do not require partners. I followed these dances up with three line dances. [Amos Moses \(Click here\)](#), [The Texas Freeze \(Click here\)](#) and [The Electric Slide \(Click here\)](#).

OK! Why make these choices? I had limited dancing space and lots of people who wanted to dance. With big circle dances I could have made two concentric circles on the small dance floor and I then picked dances that would not have the circles interfere with each other.

People could step in and step out at will.

By using line dances, I could have five lines of eight people on this size of floor. This sequence of dances allows me to teach quickly and to not expect too many wrecks by the drunks.

The rest of the program was made up of contra lines and mixers. No squares. Why? Because with squares, I figured I could only put one square safely on an 16 x 20 foot patch of portable floor with beveled edges back on to a carpeted surface. If I had done a square dance, a lot of people who wanted to dance would have had to sit down.

At the end of the program for the evening, I had many people tell me they had fun. Not one soul mentioned that there was no “square dancing”.

In my opinion, the general public is perfectly happy to dance whatever the leader(s) choose to teach them. They expect variety and they expect dance leaders who can function in often unexpected conditions. If I had tried a square dance, in that environment, it would have been a disaster. Instead, I got paid very well and the owner of the facility said they would recommend me to their next group.